

Holy Darkness: Evening Service of Word and Prayer for Advent

*Power in the Spirit 2021
Monday Evening, July 12th*

Greeting:

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, the love of Christ that guards our hearts and minds, and the joy and consolation of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Song:

O Come, O Come Emmanuel (Stz. 1&3)

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.*

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

*O come, O come O Lord of might, as to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times you gave the law in cloud, and majesty, and awe.*

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

Opening Prayer:

Stir up our hearts, O God, to prepare a pathway for your Christ. By His coming speak peace to your people and turn our hearts toward you, that your saving grace and splendid glory, may dwell in all the earth; through Jesus Christ, whose day draws near. **Amen.**

Lighting of the Advent Wreath:

Silence for reflection

We praise you, God, for this circle of light that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, kindle within us the fire of your spirit, that we may be light shining in the darkness. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may welcome others as you have welcomed us. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. **Amen.**

The first & second Advent Candles are lit as we sing together:

*Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord; be strong, take heart!*

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Scripture & Reflection:

Darkness is Beautiful

The Song of Solomon is a love poem overflowing with rich imagery. It need not be explained as an allegory of Christ's love for the church but can simply stand as an expression of being overwhelmed by the beauty of another. While older translations of the Bible translate the conjunction in verse 5 linking "black" (or "dark") with "beautiful" (or "lovely") as one of contrast (that is, "I am dark, but lovely"), the NRSV joins them as two things that belong together ("I am black and beautiful"). The scholarship

behind this decision would seem to be reflected in what follows: "Do not gaze at me. Because I am dark, because the sun has gazed on me."

This may seem an unusual passage to meditate on during Advent. Yet many of the images of Christ and the virgin Mary we are accustomed to seeing this season portray them with light skin, as if from European descent. This can give the incorrect impression that Jesus was white—a belief that has been used to defend notions of white supremacy. This passage offers a helpful contrast that is also more historically accurate.

The refrain from a hymn for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which identifies the woman in Song of Solomon with the virgin Mary puts it like this:

*O Mother dark and lovely,
hear the poor who come with their song;
Lead them into Jesus' kingdom
where they truly do belong.*

A reading from Song of Solomon 1:2-6.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!

For your love is better than wine,

³your anointing oils are fragrant,

your name is perfume poured out;

therefore the maidens love you.

⁴Draw me after you, let us make haste.

The king has brought me into his chambers.

We will exult and rejoice in you;

we will extol your love more than wine;

rightly do they love you.

⁵I am black and beautiful,

O daughters of Jerusalem,

like the tents of Kedar,

like the curtains of Solomon.

⁶Do not gaze at me because I am dark,

because the sun has gazed on me.

My mother's sons were angry with me;

they made me keeper of the vineyards,

but my own vineyard I have not kept!

(Silence for Reflection)

Song of Reflection

Joyful is the Dark (ACS 1096)



1 Joy - ful is the dark, ho - ly, hid - den God,
 2 Joy - ful is the dark, Spir - it of the deep,
 3 Joy - ful is the dark, shad - owed sta - ble floor;
 4 Joy - ful is the dark, cool - ness of the tomb,
 5 Joy - ful is the dark, depth of love di - vine,



roll - ing cloud of night be - yond all nam - ing:
 wing - ing wild - ly o'er the world's cre - a - tion,
 an - gels flick - er, God on earth con - fess - ing,
 wait - ing for the won - der of the morn - ing;
 roar - ing, loom - ing thun - der - cloud of glo - ry,



maj - es - ty in dark - ness, en - er - gy of love,
 silk - en sheen of mid - night plum - age black and bright,
 as with ex - ul - ta - tion, Mar - y, giv - ing birth,
 nev - er was that mid - night touched by dread and gloom:
 ho - ly, haunt - ing beau - ty, liv - ing, lov - ing God.



Word - in - flesh, the mys - ter - y pro - claim - ing.
 swoop - ing with the beau - ty of a ra - ven.
 hails the in - fant cry of need and bless - ing.
 dark - ness was the cra - dle of the dawn - ing.
 Hal - le - lu - jah! Sing and tell the sto - ry!

Text: Brian Wren, b. 1936

Music: LINDNER, Carlton R. Young, b. 1926

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Prayer

In Christ Jesus we meet the God who knows our weakness and bears the wounds of the world. Therefore, let us be bold as we pray, trusting that God draws near to those in any kind of need.

We remember that you made us beautiful, but the image of God in us can be obscured by harmful societal messages or expectations around beauty. Our own feelings of guilt and shame can also cause us to doubt our belovedness as children of God. We lay at your feet any past wounds or actions that diminished our sacred worth. Enfold us in your arms of love and comfort, Lord.

We remember before God all who are frightened... those who have received unexpected news...all who dream of a better day...all whose relationships are strained or broken...all who must make difficult

decisions...all who must leave their homeland...all for whom the world has no room...all the joys or concerns we offer now in the silence of our heart...

Into your wide embrace, O God, we place all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, trusting that you will receive them into your heart of mercy, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior. **Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, we pray the Prayer Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing:

God all mighty, God most merciful bless us, keep us, and give us peace. **Amen.**

Song:

Deep Peace (ACS 1018)

The musical score for 'Deep Peace' is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. The first system has a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The bass staff has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: 'Deep peace of the run - ning waves, deep peace of the'. The second system also has a treble and bass staff. The lyrics are: 'flow - ing air, deep peace of the shin - ing stars to'. The third system has a treble and bass staff. The lyrics are: 'you, deep peace of the qui - et earth. earth.'. Above the treble staff, there are two markings: 'To repeat' and 'Last time'. The 'To repeat' marking is above a double bar line. The 'Last time' marking is above a double bar line. The music ends with a double bar line.

Text: Celtic traditional; adapt. Ray Makeever, b. 1943
Music: DEEP PEACE, Ray Makeever
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